What Is Christian Apologetics?

Why would anyone, or why should anyone become a Christian? Why should anyone place their faith in Jesus Christ – a man who lived over two thousand years ago? There have certainly been various and sundry answers to this question throughout this history of Christianity. Christian apologetics is both the science and art of answering this question by using reasons and evidence.

The word apologetics first appears in the New Testament in 1 Peter 3:15 where the Apostle Peter addressed early Christians in Asia Minor (a Roman province) who were suffering persecution because of their faith in Christ. He writes:

> But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them nor be troubled, but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense (apologia) to anyone who asks you for a reason (logos) for the hope that is within you: yet do it with gentleness and respect (ESV).

Within this one verse, Christian apologetics is summarized nicely. Christian apologetics can be summarized in two parts: (a) objective reasons and evidence that Christianity is true (it corresponds to reality) and, (b) the communication of that truth to the world.

Proclaiming the Evidence For Christianity and Cross-Examining Claims Against It

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The Objective Evidence that Christianity is True

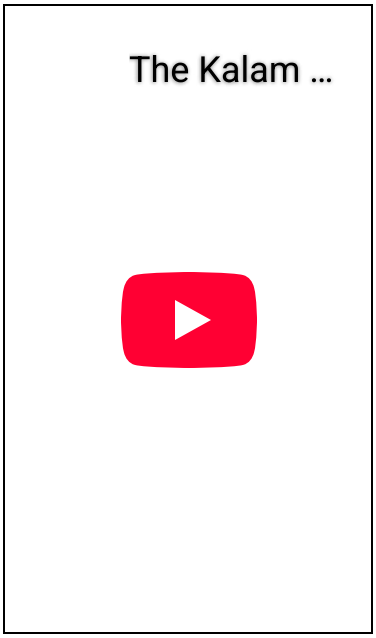
The earliest Christian believers were Jews, and so ironically the earliest Christian apologists were Jews. As they shared their new faith in Christ to their

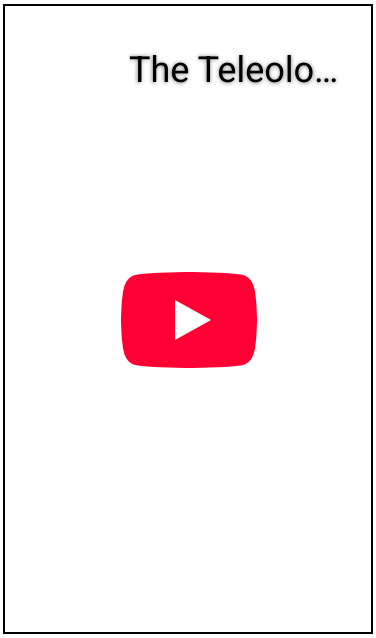
Jewish families and friends they appealed primarily to the Old Testament and to Jesus' bodily resurrection as the primary reasons for belief in Christ.

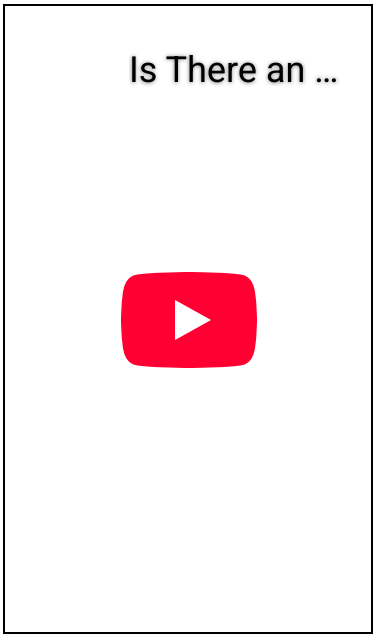
Today (in the 21st Century) Christian apologists must contend with such philosophies and ideologies such as naturalism, atheism, pantheism, and post-Modernism. At CrossExamined.org we employ a classical apologetic approach in defending Christianity that is summarized here.

Classical apologetic approach: (a simplified outline)

- Truth exists (objective reality can be known)
- God exists (classical arguments for God's existence







- Miracles are possible (the universe is not a closed system)
- The New Testament is Historically Reliable (manuscript evidence & archaeology)
- Jesus has risen from the dead (hence, Jesus is God)

Once these truths are established, they must be communicated in a way that is understood by an audience.

The Communication that Christianity is True (& Should be Believed)

The Apostle Paul was also Jewish and appealed primarily to his fellow Jews to believe in Christ, but he also appealed to non-Jewish Gentiles (Romans & Greeks) as well. When he visited Athens he reasoned with Epicurean & Stoic philosophers on Mars Hill, the center of ancient Greek philosophy (Acts 17:16-34). While there, Paul quoted Greek philosophers such as Epimenides. In doing so Paul was contextualizing the Gospel so that it could be understood by his listeners. This is the second critical part of Christian apologetics – effective communication to a particular audience.

In 1 Cor. 9:20-23 Paul writes:

To the Jews, I become like a Jew in order to win Jews. To those under the law, I became as one under the law (though not myself being under the law) that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law, I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. To the weak, I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means, I might save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.

The Gospel must be clearly communicated and understood in order for it to be believed. Each new generation of Christians must communicate and defend the Christian message in the milieu or social and cultural context in which it finds itself. The culture will change over time but the core Christian message never changes.

Christian apologetics seeks to build bridges to unbelievers by presenting reasons and evidence that Christianity is true, rational and worthy of belief. The late twentieth-century Christian apologist Francis A. Schaeffer saw

Christian apologetics as "pre-evangelism" – a way to prepare the mind and heart for the Christian message (the Gospel). The connection of apologetics with evangelism is best summarized by Oxford theologian Alister E. McGrath:

"…Christian apologetics represents the serious and sustained engagement with 'ultimate questions' raised by culture, people group, or individual aiming to show how the Christian faith is able to provide meaningful answers to such questions. Where is God in the suffering of the world? Is faith in God reasonable? Apologetics clears the ground for evangelism, just as John the Baptist prepared the way for the coming of Jesus of Nazareth. …Evangelism… issues a personal invitation: 'You are invited to the feast! Please come!' Apologetics lays the ground for this invitation; evangelism extends it. Both are an essential part of the mission of the church." (Mere Apologetics: How to Help Seekers & Skeptics Find Faith, pg. 22-23)

To learn more about Christian apologetics for yourself or for your small group check out our resources at www.ImpactApologetics.com.

A good place to begin is with our book I Don't Have Enough Faith to be an Atheist, and one of the very first Christian apologetics curriculums (great for churches, Christian schools or small groups!), I Don't Have Enough Faith to be an Atheist- Curriculum.

We also have a free App for your smart-phone. The App contains excellent resources on Christian apologetics (podcasts, blog, and quick answers section) The CrossExamined.org mobile App can be downloaded here

–Frank Turek

CrossExamined.org is a non-profit ministry started in 2006 that conducts dynamic I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be An Atheist seminars on college campuses, churches, and high schools

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